

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
EXTENSION SERVICE  
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PROGRESS REPORT ON URBAN HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK

Northeastern Committee on Urban Home Demonstration Agent Work  
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This committee was appointed to make recommendations after the New London Conference in 1945. One meeting was held early in 1946. The committee at that time agreed to present the first report as a series of questions, hoping thereby to stimulate lively discussion and exchange of ideas based upon the experience in the several States. Following are the questions and the recommendations of the committee to date:

(1) What are the objectives of urban home demonstration work?

In general they are the same as for rural work: (\*1) To help homemakers make the wisest use of available cash, time, and other resources in order that they and their families may have and enjoy as many as possible of the comforts, conveniences and satisfactions of life.

Two additional objectives have been stated for urban work: To supply a larger market for the protective foods produced on our farms and to promote the growth of rural urban understanding.

(2) Is there a need and demand in urban areas for home economics adult education?

Wartime programs in nutrition, food preservation, and victory gardens proved that urban homemakers are interested in extension programs. Need and demand are further indicated by the continuance of State, county, and city appropriations for urban work in areas where successful urban home demonstration programs are in operation. In New York State, Syracuse and Buffalo have had urban home demonstration agents for 28 years; each of these agents now has 2 assistants, 2 secretaries, and a teaching center. Rochester has had an urban agent for 26 years.

In urban areas where there is no home demonstration work, more and more women are requesting opportunity to participate in this tax-supported program.

(3) To what extent is this need being met by other agencies?

Home economics education for adults is carried on in urban areas through many organizations and agencies, such as public schools, Red Cross, utility companies, stores, newspapers, radio, and others. A complete picture of coverage by these agencies is not available, but the Office of Education reports, for the school year, 1944-45, that 377,531 adults, including 17,140 men, enrolled in homemaking courses conducted by public schools. Many of these courses were carried on for 32 hours; 2 hours a week for 16 weeks. Enrollment in Omaha and Lincoln, Nebr. totaled 13,122; Kansas City and St. Louis, Mo., 10,372; 20 cities in Wisconsin, 27,132. Highest enrollments in the Northeastern States are in New York, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.



A report from the Red Cross, July 1, 1944, to June 30, 1945, on Red Cross nutrition work in urban areas shows that 99,000 women completed either the short nutrition course of 6 lessons in 12 hours, or the longer course of 10 lessons in 20 hours. In addition, 900,000 women in urban areas attended food demonstrations sponsored by the Red Cross.

(4) To what extent is urban home demonstration work now being carried on by Extension?

In 1945, there were 49 urban extension workers in 12 States, including 2 men and 1 negro woman. Salaries were paid from Emergency War Food funds, Bankhead-Flannagan funds, and special appropriations from States and cities. As of January 1, 1946, 19 urban extension agents, including 2 men, are on Federal cooperative appointment in 10 States. With the exception of New Jersey and New York, the expense of this work is largely met by State funds, including some Bankhead-Flannagan funds. In New Jersey and New York, with 10 agents in 5 cities, county and city appropriations contribute from \$1,000 to \$4,000 per agent toward salaries.

In 1944, home demonstration work influenced 3,415,820 homes, of which 1,273,595 were other than farm homes. Many of these were rural nonfarm families rather than urban, but in New York State the Syracuse urban agent estimates 125,000 people in that city assisted directly in 1945, through meetings, consultant service, correspondence leaflets, press, and radio. In Rochester, 15,535 families were assisted in 1945 in the food conservation program alone.

As indicated, several agencies have successful programs in adult education in home-making. However, the number of urban homes reached through all these agencies is low in proportion to the total urban population.

(5) Is the Extension Service well fitted to do urban home demonstration work?

From our past experience with urban work and from our more recent experience with the war emergency programs, we know that large groups of urban women respond eagerly to extension organization, programs, and methods of teaching.

Organization: We know from experience in New Jersey and in the smaller cities of New York State that urban work can be organized as an integral part of the county extension service. In New York support has been strong for urban work organized as a separate but related part of extension work; in Pennsylvania the Extension Service has been successful in working through existing organizations in cities.

The committee is of the opinion that the organization of the urban home demonstration program will differ by States. Whatever the organization, the committee considers a local advisory committee for urban work important. This may be a large committee representing all social, civic, industrial, and educational organizations and agencies interested in the home, in which case a small steering committee might be desirable. Suggested for the advisory committee would be the mayor, representatives of the city council, chamber of commerce, churches, schools, social agencies, health services, and women's clubs and organizations. This committee would sponsor, foster, and help develop plans for the urban program.

Program: This would be developed by the urban cooperators and the urban committee with the agent, the specialist, the State leader, and if there is a city-county organization, the county committee. The program needs to be developed according to the needs and resources of urban families.



Methods: Extension teaching methods may need adaptation in terms of urban experience and in terms of time allotted by urban women for meetings. It may be well to consider carefully the extension methods listed on pages 27, 28, and 29 of the report, Home Demonstration Work in the Postwar Years. (\*2)

Agents: They will need to be well poised, mature in judgement, and socially adept. They will need initiative, adaptability, and integrity in as full measure as their rural coworkers.

(6) How should urban home demonstration work be financed?

If the organization for urban home demonstration work is a part of the county extension organization, a combination of Federal, State, and local funds may be used to support the work. If the organization in urban areas is not a part of the county extension organization in that area, effort should be made to get local funds for the larger part of the costs, supplemented by State appropriations for home demonstration work in urban areas or by city appropriations for this purpose.

(7) Does the rural home demonstration program need to be protected so that funds and personnel are not spent disproportionately for urban work?

Because urban citizens are, in general, ready and willing to express their needs to the officials who represent them, it will be important that financial planning for rural and urban work be carefully coordinated. Mutual support by the two groups should strengthen each. In New York the law is so written that the county must set aside a given amount of money for urban work over and above that appropriated for county work before State support for the urban program is available.

(8) How shall urban home demonstration work be supervised?

The over-all program: Specialists will confer with advisory committee and with local leaders to determine situations and problems in the urban areas. Specialists will also utilize all other available opportunities to determine the program when working in an urban area. They will submit the program to the director as in rural-program determination. The program will be submitted also to city or county officials who are cooperatively supporting it.

The urban home demonstration agent will present the recommended program to the advisory committee. The urban program, if administered with the rural program, will be presented with the county program at the time of the annual meeting.

The office: The office set-up should be parallel to the rural or county office if apart from it. If urban and rural agents are housed together, the secretaries will work cooperatively and supervision may be by the county home demonstration agent, with the urban agent as an associate.

Training for the agents: The regularly planned conference for training of rural agents can be adjusted to fit the needs of the urban agent. Urban agents will occasionally need to hold conferences with the State leader or with specialists to consider programs of special significance to their areas. Because of the comparatively few urban agents, it may be advisable to hold occasional meetings for them outside of the State.



The State leader and specialist will visit and work with urban agents in a manner similar to that arranged for rural workers. Urban and rural workers will together confer with the State leader and the specialists so that there will be understanding and unity in the county plans.

Supervisory methods: State leaders and specialists need training and experience in effective methods for urban development and expansion. The important possibility of leadership development should be emphasized. Kinds of subject matter most acceptable to urban homemakers as well as tools for presenting this matter need study.

(9) What is the place of local leadership in urban home demonstration work?

Local leadership will be the same as that in rural work: Leaders will be given practice in planning together for the common good; they will extend the teaching of extension practices; and encourage individuals to gain self-confidence and respect for the abilities of others.

(10) How can home demonstration work be coordinated with existing programs in adult homemaking education?

Through the careful selection and skillful use of the advisory committee. As the county nutrition committees provided for coordination of effort in one field, so might a representative group of workers in home economics and related subjects provide for general coordination of the adult educational program in the light of certain objectives. Groups will not lose their identity in so doing, if we recognize the particular contribution of each group and if we work for coordination of programs to attain the recognized common goals of adult education in home economics.

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(\*1) A. Objectives of home demonstration work in urban areas are similar to those of rural home demonstration work: To help individuals to achieve in their homes and communities a greater measure of health, convenience, comfort, beauty, and satisfying relationships than now exists.

B. Objectives of home demonstration work have also been stated in this form:

1. To develop desirable standards for home and community living.
2. To understand and appreciate the function and the relationships of the home in the social order.
3. To obtain and manage an income, both money and nonmoney, which will contribute to better living.
4. To plan and manage both productive and leisure time to the end that energies and resources may best be conserved and utilized and the maximum of satisfaction be gained.
5. To promote and maintain health.
6. To discover, develop, and utilize leadership, especially among women and girls.



7. To make such personal and family adjustments as are essential for individual and family security.
8. To develop civic consciousness and a willingness to assume responsibility in contributing to the public welfare.
9. To utilize the results of scientific research in relation to home and family life.

C. The ultimate objective of the Extension Service is to help rural people by educational means to promote their own growth and well-being through the development of leadership; the encouragement of efficient management; the stimulation of thoughtful planning; assistance in establishing and maintaining adequate standards of family living; greater opportunities for education and self-development of youth; and the encouragement of effective economic, social, and cultural organizations.

By changing the word "rural" to "urban" we have stated the objectives of urban home demonstration agent work.

(\*2) Adapting our methods to reach the less formally educated homemakers:

The 1940 census shows that in the United States the formal education of 36 percent of the rural farm persons 25 years and older does not extend beyond the sixth grade. Thirty-nine percent have finished the eighth grade only, and 19 percent have attended high school but have not gone further. Only 4.7 percent have had some college education. These figures show that extension teaching methods in most instances should be adapted to people with a small amount of formal education.

Racial and ethnic groups as well as the cultural patterns of the people affect our teaching methods. Methods also vary with the age of the participants, and their past experience in extension work or other activities.

Some of the same teaching methods can be used for all groups. In any program undertaken, the teaching method used should be a stimulus for action on the part of the individual or group. In most cases (wherever possible), best results are obtained when group participation is used. To spread the extension program it may be necessary that lay people who for years have participated in extension activities, help in presenting material to new groups. This will necessitate training these people in teaching methods. The type of teaching method used should be in direct relationship to the program being sponsored. Some of the teaching devices applicable to all groups include:

- (1) "Consultant service which might be in the nature of telephone or office calls, home visits, radio." A consultation service might be carried on at a specific time at a local center. Consultant service could be performed by agents or by local leaders.
- (2) Trailer or mobile service would be a means of showing practices in all phases of family living. A mobile service would use different teaching devices such as exhibits, demonstration, and short talks. County or State-wide mobile units could be established at a small cost. Such units might be financed by civic-minded organizations or firms or by the county extension organization.



(3) Method demonstrations are still good means of putting across programs. A combination of method demonstration and workshop can also be effective.

(4) Result demonstrations do much to show how practices can be carried out. Modest demonstrations are particularly effective in showing results without too great an outlay of money and energy.

(5) Women, for the most part, like workshops, as they are a means of group participation and leaders feel less self-conscious when presenting material.

(6) Tours can be used to advantage, especially in home improvement.

(7) Exhibits take time and imagination, but are a means of reaching many people who would never be reached otherwise.

(8) Illustrated talks by use of blown-up pictures, slides, strip films, movies, placards, and other illustrative material help create interest in the proposed program.

(9) Campaigns are effective in putting across a program that applies not only locally, but also to the county or the State.

(10) Teaching materials such as bulletins, leaflets, and circulars need to be simple well prepared, and adapted to the needs of this large group of homemakers.

(11) News stories can be prepared. Lay leaders and agents should be trained in recognizing, writing, and channeling news.

(12) Radio can be used by lay leaders and agents in presenting information. Training needs to be given workers in this field.

(13) The group discussion method can be used by lay people and agents trained in this method of teaching. Only subjects in which the leader is wellversed should be used in this method.

(14) Panels and symposiums are good means of participation by several people. They are means of getting other agencies and organizations interested in the same subject to participate.

(15) Coordination with other groups, by helping either lay people or county workers, can bring about a better understanding of programs.

(16) Interest in improved practices can be stimulated through contests. Knowing how to sell an educational practice is as valuable as knowing the practice, and workers should study accepted methods of salesmanship. In all teaching methods agents need to be trained in techniques. It is also important that more time be spent in the selection and training of local leaders. Local leaders should realize that there are many factors more important than being a project leader, that they can, through their training, become real community leaders. As experienced leaders step into the higher ranks of leadership, new leaders can be trained in the different teaching methods.



### Emphasizing the group discussion:

Increased emphasis should be given to the discussion of public policies as well as to community problems. Training of discussion leaders and preparation of accurate simplified materials is important to the success of such programs. The extension staff as well as the lay leaders need such training and materials in order that all may feel secure in attempting this vitally important task.

### Using the newer tools of education:

There is need for exploring the possible uses and the relative effectiveness of movies, slides, blow-ups of bulletins, leaflets, and of direct radio teaching. It is quite possible that by using new tools we can greatly increase the attendance at demonstrations and training schools without losing the effectiveness of the teaching.

If urban expansion is to come as a part of the county home demonstration program, consideration must be given to the personnel and qualifications of the county home demonstration staff required for the expanded program. Experience has shown that urban homemakers are concerned primarily with the educational program, that they expect it to be sound, timely, adapted to the needs of urban families and presented clearly, briefly, and in relation to urban experience. This adaptation of program can be made primarily at the county level.

